

Address delivered by Hon. John E. Fogarty, MC, at the 9th Annual Convention of the Rhode Island State Industrial Union Council, C.I.O., at the Narragansett Hotel, Providence, R.I. - Sunday - December 1, 1946.

When this convention of the CIO in Rhode Island has come to final adjournment, you representatives of the various CIO locals in our State will have charted the course of your organization for the coming twelve months.

Your officers will have explained what, in their studied judgements, are the principal difficulties with which you must contend - and will have presented their plans for meeting and overcoming these difficulties.

While I am not a member of your organization I have always been proud that I have been considered your friend. I am proud to be invited here to speak to you and my only hope is that I might offer a thought or two which will assist you in the consideration of your problems during the months ahead.

There was a time when a convention like this was impossible. There was a time - not too long ago - when the mere attempt to assemble in a public meeting of labor union delegates would have resulted in cracked skulls, raids by goon squads - and every conceivable, legal and illegal measure to destroy the effectiveness of such an organization.

We can thank God such days exist only by memory.

But in those memories there are many lessons we have learned. There are some we have yet to learn.

There are many brave men who went to early graves because of their labor union activities. There have been many courageous housewives, grown old before their time, who learned at first hand about the pangs of hunger - the sufferings of poverty and misery because their men had the intestinal fortitude to fight for their rights as Labor Union Representatives.

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Those men fought - not for special privilege, not for unrestricted license - they fought for a principle - and that principle, reduced to its simplest terms, is merely this - the working men and women of this country aid in the production of our industrial wealth. They have a God-given right to share in the fruits of that Industrial wealth.

We are the men and women who have inherited all the good things for which these brave men and women fought and suffered and, in many instances, died.

If we will be true to that heritage - then we must, by all the rules of logic and common sense, regard it as a sacred trust. We must, if we will be true to the positions we occupy as leaders in the trade union movement, we must consider always that we work for the good of all working people, and our activities must always be conducted with a view to the promotion of the general welfare.

It seems but yesterday that representatives of Industry by any means available, sought to impress upon the minds of the public the fact that Industrial Relations were in fact part of a class struggle. Unions were evils which beset the operations of industrial plants - just like Robbers and plagues. They were problems which could be coped with only by repressive and punitive legislation, restraining orders and injunctions, and, these failing, by resort to the truncheon and rifle.

The idea that management and labor should sit around the conference table and explore their difficulties and find their solution in the light of reason and good feeling - one to another - was considered the rankest kind of folly - or the wildest kind of radicalism.

In those days the trade union movement was always on the defensive and it is little wonder that the average worker looks upon management as his sworn enemy - and considered it necessary that he be aggressive at all times in his dealings with industry.

The average worker learned from bitter experience that he would be tossed out in the street, with no consideration whatever for the welfare of himself or his family, once work became slack. The average worker learned from bitter experience that the slightest move in the direction of organization would bring prompt dismissal from the plant - or if the plans had progressed to the point where an organization was taking shape - then a lockout occurred and the worker's choice was one between hunger and misery - or abandonment of his plans for union organization.

In the light of such facts - is it any wonder that trade unions become aggressive? It was the never-ending struggle against such adversities that made the trade union movement strong and effective.

That strength has brought a great many rewards. That aggressiveness has won for labor unions a powerful position in the economic and industrial life of our country - and with the development of that power there has come an equalizing weight of responsibility.

For generations the pioneers of the trade union movement fought for the right to bargain, through their chosen representatives, with the managers of industry in the determination of wages, grievances and working conditions generally. That right was won. It is sacred to labor. It must be guarded with every ounce of vigilance and strength which we can muster.

For generations management used the judicial process as a tool to drive labor into submissiveness, to keep labor hamstrung, to prevent the accomplishment of its simplest demand. The injunction stood side by side

with the gun and club in Industries arsenal of weapons with which it fought Labor's development. That weapon has been taken from the hands of blind industrialists who refused to recognize that the world was changing and that working men and women were coming into their own. That weapon must never be restored to industry and it behooves us to defend and maintain the Norris-LaGuardia Act with all the strength we can call to our command.

We face very serious days. The work of many generations of Labor leaders is now under fire. It would be folly for anyone to assert that Labor's position is not threatened. It would be ridiculous for anyone to assert that there is no danger of a new kind of shackle being forged on Labor's ankles.

No longer is it possible for anyone to say we shall await developments. It is a denial of the facts to argue let us wait and see what will happen. What will happen has already begun to happen. You and I - every Labor Union official - every Labor Union member - is actually on trial. The rights which we regard as priceless are on the block. The weapons which would destroy those sacred rights have already been forged and they are ready, willing, and able to strike from the statute books of this land, every vestige of beneficial legislation which Labor has managed to have written into the law of the land.

Now is the time for vigilance. Now is the time for courage and strength, if we would protect the position we have won - and prepare to help in the advancement of all Americans to even greater heights of social and political development than has yet been achieved.

Now is the time - too - for honesty and frankness. Now - more than ever before, and perhaps ever again - it is vitally important that we be honest with ourselves - with the members of Labor Unions, with all working men and women in America - and honest too - to the memories of those pioneers who laid the foundation for the position which we occupy today.

We know that we shall never cease our efforts to better ourselves. We are Americans - and as Americans we have a right and a duty to constantly strive to achieve a better place in the sun. We want to enjoy more and more of the fruits of the labor which we contribute to the development of the material wealth of our country. But while we are striving to do this - we have a parallel duty to all Americans to aid in the advancement of the general welfare.

We know that our primary concern is employment - Full Employment. We know too that we can't have employment unless factories and shops of all sorts are flooded with orders for the products which they turn out. We are consumers as well as producers and we know, that to satisfy our wants in both categories - there must be constant production at a high level. Whatever interferes with production - whether it be blind selfishness on the part of management - or Bull in the China Shop tactics on our part - hurts all of us.

We can overcome all our difficulties - we can continue to grow and prosper - by the use of common sense - by an honest facing of the actual facts with which we have to cope.

No general uses the same methods in every campaign. Military science embodies the idea that the plan of attack must conform to the actual conditions which confront the military forces. So, I think, we have to adjust our tactics to the actual facts which face us.

In promoting progress it is time for us to adopt a policy of patience with firmness. We are right in our insistence that we should share in the great wealth we help to create. But we are wrong if we adopt tactics which will destroy that wealth.

We must exercise restraint. We have no right to destroy the industrial

life of our country. Headless, reckless action only serves to play into the hands of those who are deliberate and determined enemies of the Democratic system. Honesty and caution should be our weapons now. The proper use of those weapons will bring the great weight of public opinion to our side and we can effectively demonstrate that the goal we seek is right - and the course we pursue toward that goal is proper.

Production is the crying need of the hour. We can produce. We will produce.

By the exercise of restraint in our activities - coupled with a genuine productive effort - we shall convince all Americans that we are conscientious and intelligent partners in the economic and industrial life of our country. By such conduct we shall win to our side the great power of public opinion - and then we shall have forged our most effective weapon - a strong shield which will withstand the attacks of labor-baiters, and we shall need have no fear of the slings of reactionary legislators, or labor hating newspaper columnists.

